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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, August 31, 1932.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Cooking Questions." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics,  
U.S.D.A.

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Lots of questions on the program today, and they're mostly all cooking questions. Several have come from young housekeepers, beginners, trying their hand at this business of getting three meals a day.

No use being discouraged over your cooking or feeling that "born cooks" are the only ones who can achieve success in the art. Sometimes just one simple cooking trick makes all the difference between success and failure in a dish. Sometimes the trick is in putting the ingredients together. Sometimes it's in cooking them. One way to learn these little cooking secrets is to watch how the experts follow the direction's of a recipe.

Let's talk about making custard first thing, because I have three questions on the subject. And, let's ask the Recipe Lady to answer them and tell us the whys and wherefores.

One young homemaker writes that she can't seem to make good soft custard "or custard sauce", as she calls it. Hers is always speckled with bits of cooked egg, she says.

A little trick of combining the ingredeints will solve this problem. The Recipe Lady says that these bits of cooked egg are apt to occur when the egg is added to the hot milk. You see, the egg cooks before you can blend it. Next time, pour the hot liquid slowly into the slightly beaten egg and stir as you pour.

Isn't it disheartening to have a soft custard become a curdled mass just at the last minute? The next time you make custard, don't let the water boil in the double boiler. And stir the custard continuously. When it coats the spoon the custard is done, so take it off the fire at once and cool as rapidly as possible. Your custard will come out as smooth as silk.

I don't need to remind you, do I, that Rule No. 1 in egg cookery is: Cook egg mixtures at low heat. This good reliable rule applies to all custards- baked or soft.

Here's a question from a lady who's having her troubles with baked custard.

"My baked custards are always watery and the edges are full of holes. What can I do about it?" she asks.

Answer. Cook your baked custards below the boiling point and only long enough to set. Place the cups of custard in a pan of water. Bake in a moderate



oven, about 350 degrees F., until they are set. How to tell when they are set? Test them with a silver knife. Insert the knife a little way in the center of the custard. If it comes out clean, the custard is done.

So much for the little tricks in custard making. Now about meringue for the top of pies and puddings. The ideal meringue is fluffy, yet holds its shape. But some of my friends complain that the meringue they make falls flat and gets watery. And others say that their meringue sometimes burns on top before it even cooks in the center.

Guess we'll have to repeat that egg cookery rule again. It's just as true of meringue as of custard. Successful meringue comes out of a slow, not a hot oven.

Beat your egg whites very stiff. Then add granulated sugar, one table-spoon at a time, beating well. Allow 2 tablespoons of sugar for each egg white. Bake 15 to 20 minutes in a very moderate oven of 325 degrees F. until it is lightly browned.

White sauce and gravy seem to be bugbears to a lot of cooks, young and old. Nobody likes lumpy, pasty white sauce. Nobody likes lumpy greasy gravy. But a lot of people get just this kind of food.

What's the secret of making smooth, well-cooked delicious white sauce? Use one, two or three tablespoons of flour for each cup of cold milk, depending on how thick you want your sauce. Use an equal quantity of fat and flour. Blend the melted fat and flour thoroughly. Add the cold milk and salt. Heat and stir constantly until thickened. Cook over steam for ten minutes longer.

And by the way, a double boiler is the thing to use for making white sauce, soft custard, and cream soups.

Gravy? Smooth attractive gravy without a trace of fat is what we all want. Pour off all the excess fat from the pan, leaving the brown extract and just enough fat to mix well with the flour. Now add as much flour as fat and stir the mixture smooth. Add one cup of cold water for every two tablespoons of flour. Season the gravy and stir it smooth.

Speaking of lumps, do you ever have trouble with lumpy mashed potatoes? Someone told me the other day that she had given up in despair. She couldn't make mashed potatoes smooth, fluffy and lumpless.

Here are some suggestions to help you avoid lumps in mashed potatoes. Use a ricer instead of an old-fashioned masher to do the mashing. This is the easiest and quickest way of getting out lumps. Then, use hot instead of cold milk, melt the butter in the hot milk. Add enough milk so you can beat the potatoes easily. Delicious mashed potatoes are served very hot. After beating them, turn them into a baking dish and set in the oven until the last minute.

Baked potatoes? I'll take mine dry, mealy and fluffy, if you please. What about you? Ask the grocer for good baking potatoes. Some varieties bake better than others. Use a moderately hot oven. Be sure the potatoes are done to the very center before you take them out. Then take them piping hot from the oven and slit the skin on the top of each like a cross. Then gently press each potato until





it breaks through, snowy white. Top with butter and paprika.

One more question before we write our menu. This question is about cream of tomato soup. "How can I make cream of tomato soup that doesn't curdle?"

Another trick of combining prevents that difficulty. Remember to add the acid to the milk, never the milk to the acid. So pour your tomato on your white sauce. Use equal parts of thin white sauce and tomato sauce. Have them both hot when you combine them, but never allow the mixture to boil after you have combined the two parts. And serve the soup immediately.

Someone has asked me for a simple lunch or supper menu. How would you like this? Combination fruit salad made of orange sections, grapes and fresh pears. With the salad, serve nut bread and butter sandwiches. And for dessert and a beverage combined, how about iced chocolate. You can top it with whipped cream or you can put a scoop of ice cream in each glass.

Want a nice recipe for nut bread? All right. I have one for you.

2 and 1/2 cups of sifted flour	1/2 teaspoon of cinnamon
2 tablespoons of sugar	2 eggs
3 teaspoons of baking powder	1 cup of milk
1 teaspoon of salt	1 cup of chopped nuts, and
4 tablespoons of melted fat	

I'll repeat that list of nine ingredients. (Repeat.)

Sift together the dry ingredients. Beat the eggs. Add the milk and add to the first mixture. Stir in the chopped nuts and the fat. Let the dough stand in a well-greased pan for 20 minutes. Bake in a moderate oven for about 1 hour.

Let's repeat that simple lunch or supper menu before we go. Combination fruit salad made of orange sections, grapes, and fresh raw pears. With the salad serve thin sandwiches of nut bread and butter. And for a dessert and a beverage combined, iced chocolate or cocoa.

Tomorrow we'll have more to say about canning and we'll answer some of the many canning questions that are coming in every day.

